

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

What Is COPD?

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) refers to a group of diseases that cause airflow blockage and breathing-related problems. COPD includes emphysema, chronic bronchitis and in some cases, asthma.¹

With COPD, less air flows through the airways – the tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs – because of one or more of the following:^{2,3}

- The airways and tiny air sacs in the lungs lose their ability to stretch and shrink back.
- The walls between many of the air sacs are destroyed.
- The walls of the airways become thick and inflamed (irritated and swollen).
- The airways make more mucus than usual, which can clog them and block air flow.

In the early stages of COPD, there may be no symptoms or you may only have mild symptoms, such as:⁴

- A nagging cough (often called “smoker’s cough”)
- Shortness of breath, especially with physical activity
- Wheezing (a whistling sound when you breathe)
- Tightness in the chest

As the disease gets worse, symptoms may include:⁴

- Having trouble catching your breath or talking
- Blue or gray lips and/or fingernails (a sign of low oxygen levels in your blood)
- Trouble with mental alertness
- A very fast heartbeat
- Swelling in the feet and ankles
- Weight loss

How severe your COPD symptoms are depends on how damaged your lungs are. If you keep smoking, the damage will get worse faster than if you stop smoking.⁴ Among 15 million U.S. adults with COPD, 39 percent continue to smoke.⁵

How Is Smoking Related to COPD?

COPD is usually caused by smoking.³ Smoking accounts for as many as 8 out of 10 COPD-related deaths.⁶ However, as many as 1 out of 4 Americans with COPD never smoked cigarettes.⁵

Smoking during childhood and teenage years can slow how lungs grow and develop. This can increase the risk of developing COPD in adulthood.⁷

How Can COPD Be Prevented?

The best way to prevent COPD is to never start smoking, and if you smoke, quit.⁸ Talk with your doctor about programs and products that can help you quit.

Also, stay away from secondhand smoke, which is smoke from burning tobacco products, such as cigarettes, cigars or pipes.^{6,9,10} Secondhand smoke also is smoke that has been exhaled, or breathed out, by a person smoking.^{9,10}

How Is COPD Treated?

Treatment of COPD requires a careful and thorough exam by a doctor.¹ Quitting smoking is the most important first step you can take to treat COPD. Avoiding secondhand smoke is also critical. Other lifestyle changes and treatments include one or more of the following:

- For people with COPD who have trouble eating because of shortness of breath or being tired:¹¹
 - Following a special meal plan with smaller, more frequent meals
 - Resting before eating
 - Taking vitamins and nutritional supplements
- A broad program that helps improve the well-being of people who have chronic (ongoing) breathing problems and includes the following:¹²
 - Exercise training
 - Nutritional counseling
 - Education on your lung disease or condition and how to manage it
 - Energy-conserving techniques
 - Breathing strategies
 - Psychological counseling and/or group support
- Medicines such as:
 - A bronchodilator to relax the muscles around the airways. This helps open airways and makes breathing easier. Most bronchodilators are taken with a device called an inhaler.¹¹
 - A steroid drug you inhale to reduce swelling in the airways.¹¹
 - Antibiotics to treat respiratory infections, if appropriate¹
 - A vaccination during flu season¹
- Oxygen therapy, which can help people who have severe COPD and low levels of oxygen in their blood to breathe better¹¹
- Surgery for people who have severe symptoms that have not improved with other treatments¹¹
 - Lung volume reduction surgery (LVRS): Surgery to remove diseased parts of the lung so healthier lung tissue can work better. LVRS is not a cure for COPD.
 - A lung transplant: Surgery in which one or two healthy lungs from a donor are put in the patient’s body to replace diseased lungs. A lung transplant is a last resort.

Even though there is no cure for COPD, these lifestyle changes and treatments can help you breathe easier, stay more active and slow the progress of the disease.¹¹

Additional Resources

The following resources provide information and support to people with COPD and their caregivers:

- To learn more about COPD, visit the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute’s COPD Learn More Breathe Better webpage (nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/copd/).
- To find peer support, an online community and events in your area, visit the COPD Foundation website and 360Social (copdfoundation.org).
- To join a network of patients affected by COPD, visit the COPD Patient-Powered Research Network (copdfoundation.org/Research/COPD-Patient-Powered-Research-Network/COPD-PPRN-Why-you-should-enroll.aspx), which is a lung health research registry.
- To learn more about lung health and diseases, visit the American Lung Association’s COPD webpage (lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd/).
- To find peer support and resources for patients and caregivers, contact the COPD Information Line at 866-316-2673.

References

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Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
Tribal Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting Program
Naytlh - 'a "We Carry the Children"

How has the Siletz Tribal Home Visiting Program helped you and your family since participating?

- ❖ “The home visiting program has helped prepare us for our new addition by letting us know what is to be expected before and after the baby comes and how to best deal with certain situations that come up.”
– Andrea & Robert, 4 months in the program
- ❖ “I’ve learned all the things I thought I should know that I did not know already with the help and support of the program. Siletz Tribal Home Visiting Program helped me become a better mom.”
– Shyann, 1 year in the program
- ❖ “I feel like Siletz Tribal home visits have helped me be more on track when it comes to my child’s development. Home visits have also helped me keep a better schedule, helping my whole family.”
– Jennifer, 1 year and 9 months in the program
- ❖ “Getting the help when you’re a new parent is life-saving, to know you are doing it right and if not, finding out the right way.”
– Samantha, 1 year in the program
- ❖ “The program has helped me to realize there are a lot of different ways to parent and there is always help if you are willing to look for it. The Siletz Home Visiting Program has helped make my life a little simpler just knowing I have resources to help me be the best mom I can be.”
– Chandra, 1 year and 10 months in the program
- ❖ “The Siletz Home Visiting Program has helped me with my child’s growth, my motivation with being a parent and I’ve also established a friendship.”
– Brinee, 1 year and 8 months in the program
- ❖ “Home Visiting Program helped us better understand the developmental milestones that our child is at and also the reassurance that each child is unique and not to be worried. The program has been helpful, especially with different resources also.”
– Ale & Seth, 1 year and 1 month in the program
- ❖ “As a first-time mom, Siletz Home Visiting Program has been a good addition to my support system, not only emotionally, but also mentally.”
– Janet, 1 year and 1 month in the program

If you are interested in or have any questions about our Siletz Tribal Home Visiting Program, please call Jessica Phillips, Program Coordinator, at 541-484-4234.